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Some of the Best

Illinois High School Prose of 1956

Selected by CHARLOTTE WHITTAKER AND CLARENCE W. HACH
Assisted by Other English Teachers of Evanston Twp. High School

Choosing some of the best prose written in Illinois High Schools is a gigantic task, we discovered largely because of the many manuscripts submitted. Members of our English Department co-operated, however, and helped screen entries as they arrived. Mrs. Whittaker and I selected what we thought to be the "best of the best," often taking out and putting back in as our judgment wavered. We assure readers of the *Bulletin* that the selections published represent several re-readings and conferences.

Many entries this year, we believe, were too theme-like; they were pretty good expositions which read easily, but which lacked the originality characterizing those of previous years. We at times were hard pressed to find really creative pieces. Many entries were filled with the trite in idea and in expression and lacked the subtlety found in good modern writing.

Despite our disappointment in not finding more originality, we did conclude that Illinois pupils are learning to write well, that they are learning and applying principles of appropriate usage, that they are seeking truth and beauty with words in perhaps the most important of all art forms—composition.

CLARENCE W. HACH

Chairman, English Department

Evanston Township High School

THE GIFT

"You do what I say and no sass."

Frank jerked away from his mother's grasp as she held out his coat.

"You better be careful," she threatened, "or the welfare lady won't give us no more money. Put on your coat and get outta the house." Her hands thrust into the pockets of her faded, soiled house-dress, her face screwed into a scowl, she prodded again, "Go on. You heard me."

The boy slammed the door belligerently behind him, walked to the corner, turned and headed across the river. On the bridge, he stopped and spat into the dark, oily water. Hands in his pockets, arms hugging his body, he scuffed across the bridge and into the coal yard. The yard was half covered with dirty, gray snow. The cold made him hunch down farther into the over-sized coat.

"Hey, you!" yelled the watchman from the doorway of his shack.

Confident that the watchman wouldn't leave his warm shelter, the boy continued across the yard, ignoring the shout. He crossed the highway and climbed the hill. At the top, he stopped for a moment, leaned down, scooped some wet snow into a hard ball, and threw it full force against the sidewalk. He made another, hard and icy, and hurled it at a passing blue Chevrolet. The driver turned his head, and Frank grinned spitefully.

On campus, that magic place he had so often passed on the way to town, he turned a corner and walking slower, approached the quadrangle. He knew that he wanted some day to be part of this; yet he did not really understand what it was: it was too far out of his reach. He passed the Student Union Building, the pillared sorority houses, coming at last to the big red-brick fraternity house. He had passed it before, but never had it seemed so large.

The sign swinging from the porch light filled him with a sudden surge of hatred. PARTY FOR UNDERPRIVILEGED KIDS TONIGHT Underprivileged—underprivileged. The word rang through his mind. Underprivileged. That's me, he thought.

Noisily, he walked up to the door and pounded on it with his fist. He waited. Then he picked up the iron knocker, deliberately letting it fall full weight, four times against the door. As he lifted it again, the door opened.

"Hi! Come in. I'm Tom White."

Frank looked up at the blond crew-cut and the soft navy-blue sweater and was painfully aware of his faded plaid shirt, worn trousers, and the over-sized coat.

He did not acknowledge the greeting as he stepped into the warm hallway. The door closed behind him. Evidently he was one of the last to come, for he could hear the high, shrill laughter of other boys, mingling with the deeper tones of their hosts.

"What's your name, young fella?" asked Tom.

"Frank—Frank Doolin."

Tom consulted the list he held in his hand. "Hey, Bennett," he yelled.

Bennett came, thrusting out a large, warm hand. "Hiya, Frank," he smiled. "I'm Jim Bennett, your big brother tonight. Let me have your coat."

Frank gave up his coat, aware of the glance that passed between the two older boys. Jim guided him across the room, past the brightly lighted, tinsel tree with its white, tissue-wrapped packages underneath. He indicated a big, brown leather chair. Frank slumped into it.

Tom White, trim, composed, stood before the rowdy group of young boys, whistled for their attention, and announced that the house was theirs for the evening. They were free to do anything they wished until the games began.

Frank heard the wild whoops of the other boys, suddenly turned in the big chair, and drove a fist into the hard leather back. He sat a moment longer, then leaped up and raced to the stairs, trailing the others. Upstairs, he ran down the hall, trying the doors. One opened, and he rushed in, slamming it behind him, listening for a moment to the sound of footsteps running past.

He stood breathless in the middle of the room. He looked around him, taking in the stacks of records, the covered tennis racket, the picture on the dresser. How different his room at home was. He thought of his own dresser with the drawer that squeaked whenever it was opened; then he walked furtively across the room and pulled open one of the drawers. He stood and looked at the neat piles of white shirts and soft sweaters. He thought painfully of the emptiness of his dresser at home. Deliberately he took out each shirt and threw it on the floor. Hurriedly he went through the other drawers, flinging clothing into the air. At last, turning from the dresser, he remembered the picture, whirled around, seized it, and threw it to the floor.

Downstairs once again, Frank slouched in the big chair. Around him the playful wrestling and general rough-housing began. Twice Jim tried to get him into the sport, ruffling his hair. Frank sat silently, sullenly. The third time, seething with hatred,

he let go a fist, and then found himself sitting high on Jim's shoulders.

"Okay, Sport, let's get these guys," the big fellow said; and they attacked a group of wrestlers.

A half hour later, breathless and panting, the boys were herded into chairs. Laughing, yelling insults at each other and at their hosts, they finally quieted as the gifts were about to be distributed. Eyes bright with expectation, they watched the presents passed around.

Jim brought Frank a package, tossed it at him, and sat down on the arm of the chair. He watched Frank tear off the ribbon and the paper and with a sudden, obvious delight he could not conceal, hold up the blue sweatshirt. The boy turned around and punched Jim, hard. Then he settled back deep into the chair and stared straight ahead. Jim's further efforts to talk failed.

"Food's here. Come and get it, kids."

Hesitantly, Frank got up, heading toward the big table. Jim watched him as, silent, he downed five hot dogs.

The party was over. Without a word, Frank got his coat. He did not look at Jim.

Outside, he walked past the Student Union, past the pillared houses, down the hill, across the bridge, and into the coal yard.

"Hey!" yelled the watchman.

Frank walked out of the watchman's sight and stopped. He took the sweatshirt out of the now grimy paper and threw it full force on the ground.

"I don't take charity from nobody." He stood a moment, looking around. He pulled at a frayed edge of his coat. Then, stooping, he picked up the shirt.

NANCY GALE, J. Sterling Morton H. S., '56
Marjorie Diez, teacher

AMAH--SAN

I was seven and spoiled. I was prone to saying "No," stamping my feet, and tossing my braids. We had recently moved to China, were living in a spacious, walled house—and I was a brat. Even worse, I was fast becoming a demanding brat.

To me, servants were strange. I was at first amazed, then bewildered, and finally thrilled to discover they were to serve. "Foo?" I would say wistfully, and Foo, the cook, forever grinning

at my uplifted face, would pad flatfooted to the pantry shelf where the cookie jar hid.

After many weeks of this willful child's paradise, my mother became aware that I was unbearable. "What you need is an amah!" she told me.

"I don't need an amah," I said, not sure what it was I didn't need.

"A good strict one," she added thoughtfully.

"No!" I yelled, but I got an "amah."

Amah-san, as she was called, came one rainy November day. It was a quiet arrival; it was not a quiet stay. A northern Chinese, full and compact of body, Amah-san was all vitality. Her yellow skin was stretched smooth and taut across high cheekbones; the set of her nose was haughty and angular; and, tilted under narrow brows smoldered eyes—intense, black, flashing. All too soon I became aware of the authority which lay hidden in those eyes.

Amah-san looked at my defiant, arrogant expression. I looked back at her, hard, and sneered just the littlest, tiniest bit. Immediately she made a decision—the first thing I needed was a spanking. I saw it coming and ran. She chased. I hid. She found me and carried out that decision. I spent the next half hour cuddled in her wide lap, listening in sad-eyed wonder to her ideas of discipline. After this we had few arguments.

"Knit!" came the command in that firm voice.

"I can't." My reply was stubborn.

She responded. "Do it!"

"I've never learned how," subdued now, and anxious.

"Never?" warily.

"No," truthfully.

A sharp gaze, and then, "Like I do!" She picked up the smooth bamboo needles and began. I watched in fascination as her supple fingers plied the wool and clicked the needles with swift, easy strokes. Click, click. Her strong, narrow fingers darted. Click, click. Unbelievably the first and second rows were done.

"Now you," she said, handing me the needles. I tried. I failed. Again. And again. But—I learned.

This was Amah-san, a woman with the fiery, indomitable temperament of her Mongolian ancestors. Not a heroine, not famous, but a woman whose vigor and strength were an intimate part of my life, although mostly against my will.

Together we laughed often, and she, alone, more often—her full-blooded mirth ringing merrily behind me as I ran from that

firm, hard hand. She was fine, she was stern, she was loving, she was beautiful. I worshiped her. She dominated me. She taught me much—to work, to obey, to listen, to be humble, and to live.

JOANNA ROBERTSON, Ottawa Twp. H. S., '58
Vernon Adams, teacher

DISCOVERY

Not long ago there lived a girl named Andrea, who was six years old and went to school and read stories about Dick and Jane. Because Dick and Jane were pretty and lived on Pleasant Street and never cried, Andrea used to envy them. But one day Andrea discovered something that caused her to pity them.

It was a day on which her class had read a story rather difficult and, as Andrea noticed that afternoon, rather unsatisfying. On the way home, she had nearly grasped the reason for this when an older friend greeted her. It was Lois, a third grader, who was used to hard stories. Talking with her, Andrea felt proud of herself.

"Lois," she said, "we read a good story today. It was about Dick and Jane, and their father comes home with a big box, and Dick and Jane open it, and inside is another box, and—"

"Oh, I know that baby story," jeered Lois. "There's three boxes, and inside the smallest one there's a rubber ball."

"There is not!" cried Andrea. "Inside the third box is another box, and inside that box another and another and another, so many that there isn't a last one . . ."

"You're a liar," said Lois. "There's always a last one. And besides, the story doesn't go that way." She laughed and walked on.

But Andrea had stopped to ask herself, first, "Why did I lie?" and then, in widening wonderment, "What did I mean?"

Still wondering, she continued homeward. She wondered at Lois, who had discovered a liar; at Dick and Jane, who had discovered a rubber ball; and at herself, who had discovered infinity.

ANITA LEICHENGER, Evanston Twp. H. S., '57
Mary L. Taft, teacher

THE HILLTOP

The hilltop commanded a striking view. Far below, the river wound its way aimlessly through the pine covered hills like a giant snake. The little lumber town was readily recognized by the tiny jewels of light which penetrated the advancing dusk. Far off, across the river, the night train cried eerily as though pursued by some unseen demon, its tiny beam searching the darkness for a hiding place. A road emerged from the town, took several sharp turns as if trying to make up its mind, and then plunged into the hills and began its lonely journey, making a brown scar against the purple hue of the pines. The placid river water was broken by the wake of a barge moving downstream, with lumber stacked on it like match sticks. It glided under the lone, sturdy bridge, which was soon to be shaken by the panicked flight of the frightened train.

EDWARD VARNUM, West Rockford H. S., '57
Miss Dilley, teacher

OLD REX

I have always called him Old Rex, perhaps because as long as I can remember he has been swathed in dignity, a dog of the world. His large muscular body and kinky, multi-colored hair always appear clean, though the grimy film on your hand after petting leaves an extremely different impression. The eminence that prohibits him from chasing cats, the desire that evokes him to visit the neighbors' canine calls of feminine lure, and the lordliness that repels other dogs in mild apprehension are all revealed through his crescent arched tail.

He lives only a block away from our house and he knows Evanston as though possessing in that lofty head his private special map. Always looking to the left and right Rex crosses streets safely, his body erect and his tail permanently curled over his back. Should any driver be foolish enough to blow his horn at this prominent figure Rex defiantly plops himself in the middle of the street, to glare wiltingly at the stopped car, with the patience of Job. And though he travels free and collarless (when he can slip his head out of it!) Rex remains on amicable terms with dog-warden and policeman alike. They slyly ignore him when they are on duty.

With a friendly wag or a jocular romp Rex is the most popular neighborhood dog you could find. But there does exist a painful memory known only to Rex and myself. A few years ago he and I were devoted to each other. He was my shadow and I his. It was an extraordinary relationship. I was a ten-year-old child who loved to talk and encounter imaginative adventure with this creature I passionately loved and admired. He had an aloof though affectionate personality, an uncanny sense of right and wrong, and an idolization for me. We would play together for hours or wander tirelessly, side by side. Never was I afraid of becoming lost on these exploits because my Rex, a symbol of patience, wisdom, and trust, was near. There was a ragged hole in our screen door made by Rexie's paw, as he had scratched with great perseverance for me to come out and play, groom him, or teach him new tricks. Every morning he would accompany Dad part way to work, carrying the brief case between his teeth. He would then walk with me to school, much to the envy of my other friends. The unforgettable finale to the morning's schedule was his triumphant return to cajole Mother into feeding him some breakfast.

Then I received a puppy of my own to shower with affection, and unconsciously I closed Rex out of my life. Jealousy overpowered him and his great fire of fervent loyalty cooled. He seemed to age mentally and die in spirit.

I think the years are creeping up on Rex, maybe starting to envelope him. Occasionally I meet him. A gray fringe around his muzzle lends him the air of a diplomat. His eyes, not so dark as once, but luminous as molten steel, gaze quizzically at me. Slowly I approach him, shake hands, rub his tummy, and bury my face in the woolly depths of his neck. But somehow it's not the same. There is a feeling of coldness, of being choked, of anomalousness. Resting my head on his wiry cheek, I whisper how I love him and apologize for my cruel mistake. Though softly tender, his eyes remain distant. Soberly shaking himself Rex trots off toward the horizon. He moves stiffly but he is stately and independent. I wonder if his ebullient heart is crying to return and if his pride forbids it. Pausing, silhouetted against the sky, he half turns and wags his plumey tail; then he continues . . . alone. Tears knife my eyes, for I realize I shall never win back my dearest friend, body or heart.

MARY K. TINGLEY, Evanston Twp. H. S., '60
Elizabeth H. Bennett, teacher

ANGER

She was standing in the semi-darkened hall, relaxed and smiling. A careless word was spoken, and suddenly anger came upon her like a bolt of lightning. In a freezing motion her body became stiff, as a string pulled taut and quivering. Her hands were clenched until the knuckles were white. They gleamed eerily in the pale light sifting through the hall.

At first she just glared. From the shadowy depths around her a glimmer burst forth. It was the icy coldness in her eyes. Her lips were set in a thin, hard line. Her breathing was deep and irregular; a pent up blast of steam seemed to be on the verge of escape with every breath.

As her resentment grew, her face became contorted in a hideous scowl made all the more frightful by the yellowish half-light. Her eyes flashed with all the fire of intense fury. Her cutting voice blazed with hatred, and the long hall echoed the malediction.

MARGARET PALMER, York Community H. S., '58
Irene Polson, teacher

THE CASE OF MARLOWE HARRIS

You, Marlowe Harris, are afraid of tomorrow! You walk the damp streets and the narrow alleys until your footsteps echo and reverberate in your ears. You are afraid because you cannot stop that dreadful day from making its appearance on the pages of time. Be not afraid of fate; nothing you can do or say can alter what is meant to be. Tomorrow it will happen! What has been foreseen and planned for is finally to come to pass. Your time is running out. It seems as if your life, your hope, your freedom are being squeezed from your body. The tall, dark, gruesome buildings are towering over you, ready to fall and crush you with a horror all their own. Run, Marlowe Harris, run, for it is the only way out! But can you run, can you hide? Is there a place large enough to hold you, your troubles and your cares? You must face what you have brought about. But was it your fault? She had had a hand in it too, hadn't she? Yes, that's how it started, with her and her ideas. But it's too late to save you. You have learned your lesson too late and now in a few more hours it will be all over. You are doomed! You cannot dodge destiny; do not try! Keep your chin up and when you walk down that

long corridor, smile, for this is a day you will long remember. You will join the millions of others who are chained, doomed, detested, pitied, admired and sympathized with. Yes, tomorrow you will become a — husband!

RICHARD SERES, East St. Louis H. S., '58
Marie Ginzel, teacher

ULTIMUS

Though the winds may blow and the winds may cease, I shall forever wander the universe. As I knew no birth, so shall death be unknown. I am a traveler of unnumbered eons. My boundless vision has encompassed many suns and many worlds. Though I never completely settle, as often as not some small part of me lingers, either to flourish or to become dormant. Time, itself, is a plaything. Its relentless and aimless march amuses me. As the lowly worm's metamorphosis changes it to a beautiful butterfly, even so do I slip through countless dimensions. There is nothing I can not do, nothing I can not be, from poorest peasant to mightiest God. Even time must die, but not I. Though the universe be created and recreated, I shall endure through eternity. Only gods are more fully aware of my power.

Once, as I have done so often before, I came upon a tiny world, set with a background of a myriad twinkling jewels which are stars. Roaming the surface of this world, I came to see mighty oceans caressing barren shores. I felt the friendly pulsing warmth of a yellow sun and then the death-still cold of the night. But my stay soon came to an end as the spirit of wanderlust surged through my veins. Yet I knew I could never completely depart from here, or anywhere for that matter. That part of me which lingered waited, waited through many millenia until it became aware. Then it flourished and brought forth color to the barren world. Once the seas had been its only haven. But now with new strength and a warmer sun, it inherited dry land, and from this you came to pass. You know me well but will never be my master. In time, even you will once again roam with me through the dark corridors of time and space.

Though the winds may blow and the winds may cease, I shall forever wander the universe. As I knew no birth, so shall death be unknown. My name is "life."

MICHAEL MORTENSON, West Rockford H. S., '58
Maud E. Weinschenk, teacher

TRIBUTE TO A BELL-RINGER

There he stands, that tireless bell-ringer, all day, all week, for the whole season. What is behind that red suit, that brass bell, that white, silky beard? Of course, there's that old orphanage down Cherry Street, but that isn't worth it. There are only twelve kids in it anyhow, and what will twelve kids mean to our world?

Wait a minute, though—what really is down at that orphans' home? Those kids do seem happy. And Steve, that frail boy with the horn-rimmed glasses who played right field on the orphanage's championship baseball team last summer is the smartest boy in our science class. And Joe, that skinny one with the big ears, is a wizard with a slide rule. And how about Mary Ann, the slim girl with the straggly hair? Isn't she the one who received straight A's in home economics?

Yes, what does a bell-ringer, freezing on a busy corner really mean? Nothing much, except to those kids who might be the George Washington Carvers, the Betty Crockers, the Albert Einsteins, and the Babe Ruths of tomorrow!

KENNETH HEYL, York Community H. S., '60
Zelda Reed, teacher

THE PATH

Every day for seven years, I went over that little path in the park. I can remember how it looked on the first day of school as I hurried over it holding tightly to my new school things. It was narrow then, grown over with summer grass. Slowly, as the children wore it down, and the grass died, the path widened until it was broad and dusty. Then the rain came, soaking the path and running off into the grass beside it. Later in the year, when I came home proudly carrying a nut cup and a beautiful picture of a turkey, I came over the same path covered with the first snow of winter, marked with many little boot soles and an occasional dropped jelly bean. And even when snow completely covered the path, I followed its trace through the park.

Then came the long months to spring when the path was alternately beautifully soft and white with snow, or miserably muddy and gray with slush. I always saw the first robin in the park. I can remember trying to walk softly on the muddy path, so I wouldn't scare it. From then on, walking in the park was fun, and

I didn't always stay on the path. I wandered off to look at a new green sprout by the pine tree or to investigate a bird's nest in the bushes. Just before school was out for the summer, I came through the park looking for flowers for my newly-pasted May basket. There weren't many dandelions left by the path when I went home that day. Finally, it was the last day of school. The sky was spring-blue now, and the new grass had almost covered the sides of the path. This is how I like to remember it, warm and powdery under my feet as I went home for the last time down the little path in the park.

ELIZABETH ROBERTS, Urbana H. S., '57
Marien Seward, teacher

THE DANCE OF THE LEAVES

When the soft summer breezes become brisk northern winds, the season is open, and the dance is begun—the dance of the leaves. A few impatient leaves come skipping down to the bare brown earth where they do a few solo turns before they are joined by the rest of the troupe, who come in a wild flurry of color as they shed their dull drab dress of green for flamboyant costumes of crimson and orange, copper and gold. Floating, drifting, they come, flitting among the branches, dancing on the wind, whirling and twirling in gay unison. Daintily they reach the ground where, on tip-toe, they go skittering across lawns of dying grass and up and down the cold gray streets. Now leaping, now turning, they skim the ground in gay abandon, a mass of riotous color. But soon the winds grow colder, and the costumes become faded and torn. The dancers tire, but the dance must go on, for time is short and the wait, long—the wait till next year when the dance of the leaves will once again begin.

CAROLE HARPOLD, Genoa-Kingston Community Unit 424, '57
Gladys Wibking, teacher

THE STARLET

Today I saw my first real movie star. She came down to the drug store after she got off the train, and ordered a double malted. I didn't think she was a movie star. At least she wasn't very young and pretty. In fact, she was ugly. She must have been about fifty, overweight and bedraggled.

Hello, I said as she plumped down beside me.

'Lo, she grunted as she adjusted herself on the stool.

How are you? I said. At the time I was going through a period of politeness and formality.

I'm tired, she sighed. I've been on location all day and I'm ready to fall over.

On what location? I asked politely.

The one over by Berkeley. We've been shooting all day.

At what? I asked more politely.

We've been shooting at movies—I mean we've been shooting movies—making them, you know. She smiled at me as one would to a nursery school kid asking about babies.

Oh, are you in movies? I asked interestedly.

She looked at me strangely for a moment. Would you repeat . . . What did you say?

I said are you in movies, I said.

Haven't you ever seen me?

No, I don't watch features except for Tom Mix and Buster Keaton. I paused a minute, then it occurred to me that she might be in movies. Say, I'll bet you're in movies.

She hid her face with her napkin and fluttered her eyelashes at me. Oh, she said with a wave of her hand, how did you guess?

There was something about you that set you apart from most people. The sunglasses, your casual attire, et cetera.

What's the et cetera? She asked, staringly at me strangely.

Oh, I read it all the time so I thought I'd use it. I think it means and everything. My dad always said I had a knack for words.

Of course you must be able to speak properly—like we in the theatrical business.

What's the name of the picture you are making?

Son of the Count of Monte Cristo, she said. Look for me in it.

Prompted by custom, I asked her for her autograph. She gave it to me, looked at the clock, muttered Good Heavens, they're rolling now, and raced out of the store.

I had to pay her check. I looked at the autograph so I could look her up and get my money. The name was Elsie Steinhardt.

Eventually I forgot to collect, but when the movie, Son of the Count of Monte Cristo, came around. I went to see it. Sure enough, Elsie Steinhardt was in it—in the credits under wardrobe for Douglas Fairbanks.

[David was tempted to try his hand at the unconventional form used by William Saroyan in "Locomotive 38, the Ojibway."]

DAVID GRINSTEAD, Barrington H. S., '58
Helen Kientzle, teacher

MY ODD PETS

One day about seven summers ago I found a large green worm. I kept it in a cracker box. One morning I awoke and went, in my P.J.'s, to the box. Inside was a large sticky thing with the worm inside going round and round. I was dumbfounded. I changed into my clothes and took it over to my neighbor's across the street. He didn't know what was happening either.

When Mom got up I showed it to her. She said it would turn into a moth or a butterfly.

I carried that poor little cocoon around all day. But before it was a moth I lost it.

Every fall after that I looked in trees and bushes for more cocoons. Last winter I had eight moth cocoons and two swallow-tail chrysalises.

One day last winter I was very angry. I went into my room, and there on the floor was a beautiful swallow-tail butterfly. I became so happy I lost all my anger the minute I saw him.

I think nature has a lot for us to enjoy and we don't enjoy it enough.

ROBERT ZERFOWSKI, Centennial J. H. S., Decatur, seventh grade
Helen Hunsinger, teacher

THERE'S NOTHING LIKE A STRAIGHT ANSWER

Some people bite their fingernails. Some tap their feet. A few drum their fingers on the table while others pace the floor. Now, my mother does not have any of these mannerisms. She has one which is unique. I feel it must have taken her years of concentrated effort to develop it, but she insists it just comes naturally. What is this peculiarity? It is the art of never giving a straightforward answer to a question. She does this with such an unperturbed attitude, it is obvious she is not aware that the answer she has given does not fit the question at all.

This habit gives us some hilarious moments, but it makes it impossible to get any information from my mother. Take, for example, the other night. My mother had gotten her hair styled in a way different from the usual. As we were sitting down to dinner, my father asked the inevitable question that started the whole thing off. "Where did you get your hair cut?"

"Oh, I got it today," she blithely replied. This remark was accepted without comment as we didn't expect the right answer anyway.

"What's the name of that style?" inquired my sister, Doris.

"Weise's did it for me," was her answer to that question.

"Did it take very long?" my sister hopefully tried again.

"I got a permanent," came the reply.

"A cold wave?" I questioned quickly, hoping at last to get a right answer.

"That new girl with the red hair did it," she remarked. At this my father, Doris, and I exchanged despairing glances.

"Are you going to keep your hair that way?" I queried.

"I sat under the drier for almost half an hour!" my mother exclaimed.

Finally in desperation my father quizzed, "How much did it cost me?"

"I charged it," she explained. We were pretty much satisfied with this reply because it was the closest she had come to giving a straight answer during the whole conversation.

Not being able to stand it any longer, I implored, "Mom, why *don't* you give *direct* answers to our questions? You give the impression that you're half unconscious."

What was my mother's reaction to this? Running true to form she uttered with an air of unconcern, "There's blueberry pie for dessert."

BEVERLY HAYDEN, Rockford West H. S., '58
Maud E. Weinschenk, teacher

I HATE BEING A MOVIE USHER

Being a movie usher is the worst job in the world. It is not really a job; it is the dullest nothing in the world. I get to the theater at one in the afternoon, put on a pocketless pair of pants that are too long for me, a double breasted coat with the pockets sewn shut that is too small for me, and a blue bow tie. Then I go

to work. I stand in the lobby and wait for the doors to open. I try to put my hands in my pockets, but there are no pockets. I stand and wait.

When the doors finally open, my work is the same. I stand in front of one of the inside doors and tell younger than twelve year olds to sit in the balcony; I tell older than twelve year olds that there is no smoking in the theater, that the washroom is upstairs to the left, that the show begins at 2:05, that it is now a quarter to. I stand and wait for the feature to begin.

At 2:05 I close the doors to the theater and turn out the lights inside. I sweep the litter on the floors, clean the ashtrays, and stand inside the theater, waiting for someone to make disturbance. I do nothing. I stand and watch the B-grade movies I have seen five times already. One of the movies is violent; it is about a gang of teenagers who crack the skulls of another gang of teenagers, and who get their own skulls cracked in the process. The other movie is violent; it is about the various states of undress and nondress of the court of an Assyrian king. The plot centers on the various states of un- and nondress of the heroine, a starlet of the Hollywood school.

I stand for hours, not watching the movie, because it is terrible, not sitting down, because it is not allowed. Not talking to another usher, because it is not allowed either. I cannot read or do homework because I am supposed to be watching the people. I just stand. The drug is overpowering; I stand and do not think; I stand and do not hear or see; I am asleep with my eyes open.

I try to break the boredom. I talk to another usher, I drink a coke from the machine before I am caught, I sit down next to the door and watch for the manager. The monotony is nauseating. I would do anything, just because it was something to do. I shine my flashlight on the screen, to see what will happen. I take too frequent coffee breaks and go to the restaurant next door to play Rachmaninoff's "Variations on a Theme of Paganini." The Theme and Five, and the Eighteenth Variation are on the jukebox. I play them time after time, but they are tuned so low that I can hardly hear them. They are my lotus, but I cannot remain in this oblivion for long. Someone will punch the Elvis Presley button and drive me back to the other, the nauseating one.

I hate the job. I can hardly speak of it without swearing. I have an urge to yell in the middle of a feature, "This is the damnedest most boring job in the world, and this is the damnedest worst movie, and you are the damnedest most nauseating people,

and I hope the whole nauseating bunch of you go to hell," because it is the damnedest most boring job, and the damnedest worst movie, and the damnedest most nauseating people. I hope they all go to hell.

TIM PACKARD, Evanston Twp. H. S., '58
Clarence W. Hach, teacher

DON'T MOVE! DON'T SWAT!

Just in the middle of my English-class period it happened. Everyone said, "Don't move! Don't swat!" So easy to say but so hard to do when a great big gyrating wasp is heading right for you. For thirty minutes I had watched it circling around the room. It had always chosen to fly near me. Each time it had approached, I was just certain it was going to drop on me; but then at the last minute it would turn away. Finally it had been gone for quite awhile, but I knew that this peace couldn't last.

Then, as I said before, it happened. The wasp decided to circle back to my side of the room. It was positively the largest and the ugliest wasp I'd ever seen in all my life. The closer it came, the uglier it grew. Its large dark wings bore a fiendish light-brown cast, and they seemed to be spread out a mile. Its body was held in a semi-straight position.

If you've ever sat and tried to concentrate on something, but yet had an object as distasteful as this monster coming at you, then you know just what I experienced. I was almost certain that wasp would spit fire at me. As I watched it coming closer and closer, each detail came alive. Its long, dark body became more curved, and the wings started to fold just a little. Its long, thin, dark legs projected out; and the feelers on top of its head—extra long and thin—juttied out like horns. As this monster approached, my one thought was to move, to get away from it; but everyone said, "Don't move! Don't swat!" It continued to grow in size with each second.

Then all of a sudden I was no longer in doubt as to its intention. I ducked as much as I could without moving, but my effort was entirely in vain—as I knew it would be. The wasp dropped all right, right upon my hip. I looked at the thing, and it looked at me. It surely ought to have been able to see me; after all, it was only sitting on me. I've heard people talk about dying a thousand deaths. I died at least two thousand.

While that devilish monster was using me for its chair, someone came over, took aim, and swatted. I was so relieved that I sank back, exhausted. Soon I heard someone yell, "Move! Get up! You're sitting on it!" I moved all right, and fast! To think, after all I'd suffered, there I was, sitting upon the monster, the very cause of my fright.

And alas, it wasn't even dead yet! It was lying upon its back, with its body curled up. Its four legs were also curled, and the lower parts of them had a rather pale-yellow sickly cast to them. It was still ugly, believe me, in spite of its helplessness. The kind hero then swatted it again and rescued it from its misery. And I became the heroine of the great melodrama, "Don't move! Don't swat!"

JEAN STEWART, Jacksonville H. S., '57
Emma Mae Leonhard, teacher

PARENTS!

The door banged behind Cindy as she rushed into the house.

"Mother, Mother," she exclaimed bursting with excitement, as she headed for the kitchen. "Guess what . . . Ken . . ."

"Please, Cindy, don't bother me now. I just have to get this cake iced for the church supper tonight. Run along, dear. I have lots to do. The supper is at—Now where did I put that hot pad?"

Cindy turned away and accidentally bumped into her little sister.

"My gosh, watch where you're going, Cindy!"

"Oh, guess what, Terri. Ken . . ."

"I'm supposed to meet Patty at the game and I'm late now. So long, everybody!"

Cindy walked over to the desk where her father was sitting. "Dad, the most wonderful thing . . ."

"Later, dear; can't you see I'm busy? I have to get caught up on this book work."

Oh well, there was always Mary Ellen. As Cindy dialed her number, she was planning what she would say.

"Hello, Mary Ellen, this is Cindy. You'll never guess what happened to me! Ken asked me to go to the Homecoming dance! Oh yes, I'm thrilled to pieces! Well, I was in the Malt Shop . . ."

Suddenly the house became silent. The clatter of pots and pans in the kitchen stopped abruptly. Even the scratching of Dad's

pen had ceased. Cindy's parents exchanged glances and listened intently.

"He said . . . and then I said . . . oh it will be just dreamy!"

"Will you listen to that! Why doesn't she ever tell us anything?" mumbled her father.

Her mother nodded her head in agreement. "I just can't understand Cindy at all!"

PHYLLIS CARLEY, Galesburg Senior H. S., '59
Virginia Hinchliff, teacher

CHILD

The child turned sadly from the door. Through the place in the frosted glass where his snub nose had rested he could see the lights of the car pulling away. He scuffed one foot on the rug before raising his eyes. In the warmth of the living room he could see his sister, Joanna, laughing and talking to the girl. The orange cushions of the sofa were vivid against Joanna's dark hair as she threw her head back and chuckled. He glanced out the door once again. The car had disappeared into the dark night, taking his mother with it.

He frowned as hard as he could and took a tentative step into the cheeriness of the room. The girl paused in the story she was telling Joanna and looked at him. He turned away from her inquiring stare, her laugh like the plink plink of his toy xylophone, and from Joanna, who had deserted him to sit and laugh with that stranger.

With extreme gravity he crossed his legs and arms and attempted to sit down. Swaying slightly he finally reached the floor. He looked covertly at Joanna to see if she had noticed his feat. But she was still chattering away, her shining head bobbing up and down as she excitedly explained the principles of some new game; she hadn't seen him at all.

Turning his back on her, he stretched out on his stomach and picked up a toy. The shiny chrome on the fire engine reflected his sober brown eyes, clouded over with tears. With a quick gesture he set the little truck into motion, keeping his eyes on the silvery blur of the wheels. He shoved the engine viciously and watched with satisfaction as it went careening under a chair and against the wall.

The noise swung around the heads of Joanna and the girl. The child looked up; the girl moved toward him. "Now, Stevie," she

chided gently, "how about going to sleep? You're probably tired." She kneeled down and reached out to him. He stood up quickly and moved deliberately away, out of the room and down the hall.

The tile of the bathroom floor was cold against his small feet, even through the flannel sleepers. He stretched his little body in an effort to reach the faucets of the white porcelain sink. His fingers grasped the handle and the cold water suddenly rushed out. His hand reached again and located a glass. Solemnly he filled it and drank, his eyes peering over the top of the glass. He buried his round face into the thick roughness of a towel and then padded on into his room.

Sounds came drifting into the room: Joanna talking and playing the piano, and the girl with her, talking too and laughing. Stevie stood in the doorway a moment, then climbed into bed. He pulled the heavy quilt over his head and lay still. From under there all the sounds were muted and echoing. Now the girl was urging Joanna on as she dawdled down the hall to the room. He flopped over, pressing his hands against his ears. They came into the room and he closed his eyes tightly, pretending to be asleep. He lay rigid, trying to shut out all the happy noises. And then the light was turned out and the girl was gone.

Outside the lights flashed by—cars and trucks—and overhead an airplane droned. In the distance a train sighed to a stop, and with a chain of creaks and crashes started again. The thorny branch of a rosebush scratched the window. Across the room Joanna breathed lightly through an open mouth, and from the living room came the muffled sounds of the T. V.

Stevie drew himself up into a hard knot—his fists clenched, his face wrinkled—as he cried silently. Fear and loneliness spread through him. Hunched miserably in the corner of the bed he whimpered to himself, "I want my mother." He couldn't understand why she had left him; and he cried out for the security of her presence, afraid that she might never come back.

Gradually Stevie stretched out his round body. His fists pressed into the pillow; then, slowly, the fingers uncurled. With his eyes closed he reached out and pulled the worn edge of the blanket to his mouth. A gradually widening line of light moved across the room as the girl peered in, then the door closed and the room was dark again. An imperceptible tremor passed over his body as he relaxed into sleep.

ELLEN DIAMOND, Evanston Twp. H. S., '57
Charlotte Whittaker, teacher

"SAILING, SAILING . . . !"

The day was a myriad of colors: blue skies, bubbling opalescent foam capping turquoise waves, stark white coloring the hull of a sleek sailboat, and a very green crew bundled in orange life preservers.

Boarding *The Rebel* for the first time was really an experience. Sixteen feet, from the tip of her short nosed bow sprit to the trim curve of her heavy rudder, were filled with a mesh of ropes: fat, thin, coiled, hanging. And they looked as if only the most experienced sailor might handle them.

Our first contact with the sailing lingo was the word "sheet." As we swung about during that debut sail, Daddy, the only real sailor, ordered, "Grab that sheet!" as we whipped in a quarter turn with the boom flailing the air in wide arcs. We watched with fascination, not having the slightest idea that a "sheet" was one of the multitude of ropes dangling around us!

Still ahead of us too was knowledge of rigging and steering. In fact, it was to be three years before we were given formal lessons to teach us the difference between a jib (a sail) and a jibe (a type of turn about); the rudder and the tiller; a reach, a tack, and running free with the wind.

Meanwhile we felt safe knowing that *The Rebel* would never dump us. Her 170 square feet of sail rigged sloop-style was guaranteed to whip into the wind if she went out of control, and in doing this, she would slow to a stop.

The climax of our initial summer of sailing was an ambitious twenty-four mile trip to the Manitou Islands, which lie in Lake Michigan and look deceptively close. Smooth sailing prospects looked hopeful as we surveyed the sun dotted ripples of the lake while we headed out of the bay for the channel. Once into deep water, though, we watched whole walls of water roll toward us, then rose above them so fast it was like riding in an express elevator! *The Rebel* was a sixteen foot splinter in a riot of waves. But Daddy steered us through two hours of rough water, and the whole scant population of South Manitou Island turned out for our landing—including the men from the Coast Guard station!

This first try at time sailing stimulated our interest in racing so that last summer we began to race *The Rebel* with other boats in her class.

After a week of sailing lessons we began to realize how intricate racing methods can be. We learned we must cut in very close to the buoys (we learned to guide within four inches of them)

and still must never touch them. We saw how, when sailing quite close to a competing boat, we could cut its wind by using its breeze to push our Rebel. We practiced using the whisker pole to push out the jib and get more sail area. We tried pulling up the center board when the wind blew from behind, to cut down the resistance in the water. And we used tricks in balancing our weight for fleetier sailing.

Finally the day came for our first race. The wind blew the lake into great billows and slapped it furiously against the sand. Once underway we were blown far faster than we had ever sailed before. Heeling over so far we could see our own center board skinning along under the surface, we splashed through such heavy spray that we were drenched. Our glasses were so wet we could barely spot the buoys. Mother and Daddy, who had trained binoculars on our whole sprint, were there to see us tear across the finish line, just forty-five seconds behind the winner, for a third place.

Next summer the yacht club promises novelty races. The contestants will be given sails and told to hoist them, then race. Another type uses a balloon which is five feet in diameter. Boats will be teamed up and given a balloon to toss from boat to boat, without letting it touch the water. Rig 'n Run and Balloon Races. Who knows! Maybe we'll win one!

PAOLA GIANTURCO, Urbana H. S., '57
Mrs. Enid Olson, teacher

PEACE—OR WAR?

It is dark and silent—deep, cool, clear. God's creatures glide by in endless procession. It's difficult to live in reality in the deep, blue vastness of the sea. Down here no tumult exists, only peace. I glide effortlessly through subterranean corals. The beauty and serenity fascinate me. I am a being from a world which seems not to recognize peace. Here the purity of the water and crystalline light reflect God's plan for this earth. Yet up on top, all is gloomy and dismal. Men fight men out of sheer stupidity and hatred. But in the cool, emerald-green recesses of vast underworld paradises, exotic fish swim, corals wave, and all is peaceful. How wonderful to live here. But who am I to say where I can live? I am only a boy. As soon as my air runs out, I must return to the intricate world above!

ROD STIEFBOLD, Naperville Community H. S., '58
Dorothy Scroggie, teacher

FORTY-NINE SHADES OF GREEN

It has been two whole days now since Gus ran away, and I don't think anyone around here will ever be quite the same again. Poor Gus!

It was Mrs. Darby, down the block a few doors, who called up first. Mrs. Darby is one of those high-strung women who gets excited when any little thing out of the ordinary occurs. Her husband is president of the Benton National Bank. As I hear it, she was weeding her delphinium bed by the patio when Gus went by. Just as I left the back gate, I heard a shrill scream and a few minutes later all the shades in the Darby house flew down one after another. Mrs. Wilson, who lives directly across the street from the Darbys, has reported that since then Mrs. Darby's personal psychiatrist has visited her quite regularly.

My name is Jim Carter . . . Jimmy to Dad, James to my Mother, and Knucklehead to my little brother Doug. Before last Saturday, we were simply known as the Carter boys, but I doubt if that still holds true.

To understand the situation you must know Gus. Gus is a dog, as you've no doubt gathered, but don't be too positive about this conclusion. He may look like a dog, but I've got a sneaking suspicion that he isn't. Sometimes he acts quite human. He's very clever.

About a week or so ago Gus wandered in, and Dad sort of took a liking to him. He got that old Boy Scout feeling again and decided that it was our rightful duty to look out for and adopt Gus. Unfortunately no one claimed him. Besides, Dad thought it might be good for us to have a dog around . . . responsibility and all that, you know. Now, Doug, my little brother who is five, and I, who have already ripened to the mature age of eight and a half, were not really fond of Gus. Oh, we liked him all right, I guess, but neither of us had the nerve to ask him to sleep on the foot of our beds. Gus was a menace in many ways. Imagine watching the most exciting chapter in Captain Video and being ordered to take Gus for a walk!

Gus isn't what you'd call a mean dog, but the mailman has sworn to Dad that Gus has made several almost successful attempts to kill him. True or not, I wouldn't really blame Gus. I don't like Mr. Witcox, anyway. His mustache reminds me of the little hair brush that Dad uses on Doug and me when he feels he has to calm his nerves.

Gus, in physical appearance, is all white and very shaggy. At first glance one would wonder if he had any eyes at all. I assure you he has. In size and height he quite towers over Doug. Well, to put it simply . . . I always imagined that if the big bear rug of Dad's on the library floor ever got up enough gumption to stand up to Gus, he'd find that dogs aren't what they're made out to be these days. They're worse. I doubt if Gus would ever get up long enough to answer the challenge anyway.

Well, as I mentioned before, it happened on a Saturday morning. One of those last October days when you could still get outside comfortably, had dawned sunny and full of plans for me. I was going over to Henry Morton's back yard and help the gang finish erecting a Seminole Indian fort, but it seemed that Dad had other things in mind. He was very positive about his decision, and my usual arguments went to no avail. We were to wash Gus.

Johnny Allison's dog always behaved rather crazily whenever Johnny gave him a bath. I, myself, had never washed a dog before; and I must say the prospect was not very cheerful. Naturally I expected Gus to do the same, but as I said before, Gus is not an ordinary dog. He watched the proceedings with the air of a flag pole sitter on the Fourth of July. His intellectual attitude rather unnerved me, and I had the feeling I ought to at least ask him at what temperature he preferred his bath water; however, I decided against it.

Doug and I, with grim faces, set to work. Gus refused to cooperate at all and began by chomping through the garden hose before we could dislodge it from his mammoth jaws. I was also handicapped in that Doug paid no attention whatsoever to the work at hand and insisted upon watching Dad use the new spray gun he borrowed from Henry Morton's dad to paint the garage green.

I kept on thinking about the new fort at Henry's and imagined that if we didn't get it built soon we would be erecting a U. S. Calvary cemetery in its place. Finally I made a deal with Doug. Dad had turned the corner of the garage and was out of sight. I promised Doug a quarter, my big blue marble with only one chip out of it, and my chocolate cake at dinner that night if he would finish the rest by himself and not tell Dad. Doug drove a hard bargain, and I had to promise my robin's egg and three sticks of chewing gum besides before he agreed to it. The only thing was that when I got over to Henry's house, I found out that he was going to his grandmother's house for dinner and couldn't come out

to play. So I went home. Dad wasn't anywhere around. I figured he probably ran out of paint or more likely out of energy and gave up. I decided to sneak up on Doug and scare him. Slowly I crawled through the grass and peered through Mom's azalea bush at the corner. Before me lay a sight I shall never forget.

Doug, a fiendish gleam in his eyes, was very deliberately spraying Gus with Dad's spray gun. Apparently he had given up on trying to get Gus white and decided on another shade. I must say it worked splendidly. Gus's coat was still wet, and the green oozed over him in hundreds of odd tints and shades. A limp piece of Mother's clothes line hung between Gus and the formerly white picket fence. Gus's tail hung down in discouragement and his face . . . well, it looked like Mr. Darby's might if he had taken a shower absent mindedly with his best tuxedo on. Doug looked like something rejected from the moon, and I knew when Mom saw him that's where he'd wish he was.

The more I watched the funnier it became. Finally I couldn't keep still any longer, and I let out a whoop of laughter. It startled Doug, as I needn't say, and Gus jerked so hard that it pulled him free of the robe. Doug and I both grabbed for him and missed. We ran around the yard shouting and chasing Gus. I was laughing so hard, the tears ran down my cheeks, but Doug didn't say a word. Dad came charging down the steps and promptly tripped over a ladder into the morning glory vines. He reminded me of a camouflaged soldier who was hunting for his helmet in the jungle. Then, of course, Florence had to come up and open the gate to call to Doug. Florence was Doug's girl-friend. Well, Gus ran over her so fast, I saw only a faint green flash. The tell-tale green paw prints on Florence's new white organdy pinafore, however, set us on the trail. Unfortunately it sent Florence home screaming that she hated all dogs, which meant Gus, and all people who owned dogs, which meant Doug; and therefore, would never ever speak to him again! Though this completely deflated Doug, it amused me all the more; besides, it was the calamity I had been praying for all day. I set out to follow him.

As I said, Mrs. Darby was the first to call and inform my confused Mother that we should bar our doors and windows. She refused to say why.

Allan Carson ran the filling station at the corner of Fifth and Weston. He had been busy that afternoon and had not eaten his lunch. Now he sat down on the steps of his station office and opened his lunch box. He had just swallowed the first few gulps of coffee from his thermos when he nearly choked to death. He

could swear that the dog standing over by the first pump was green. All different shades of green! He blinked again and the dog disappeared. Suddenly he felt rather ill. Just wait until he got home tonight, he'd tell Maybel what he thought of her coffee. Imagine—GREEN!

It was kind of chilly on Fifth and Weston as I reached the corner. I wished I had brought my coat. At the filling station, I noticed Mr. Carson. It was funny . . . he was dumping all the coffee out of his thermos bottle into the geraniums in his window box. As I turned the corner I noticed a policeman by the newspaper stand. He was giving some lady a ticket. I had planned to ask him about Gus, but decided it would be wiser to try to keep up with him.

"But officer, I can explain!" said Sue Collins. "You see I was watching this green dog across the street . . . I tell you I didn't see the light change . . ."

"Sure, lady, sure. And you thought the street light was a giraffe with three eyes, and I was a kangaroo riding a merry-go-round. I'll see you at the station at 10:30 a.m. on Thursday morning. You ought to see the blue canary that I keep down there!"

I kept up a pretty good pace and was looking across the street, when I nearly bumped into some lady standing in the center of the sidewalk. She looked rather strange. Her groceries were sitting on the ground kind of topsy turvy, and she stared at me with her mouth open just like the statue in front of the city hall. I started to ask her if she'd seen Gus or if I could help her with her groceries, but she started walking off and left her groceries right in the middle of the sidewalk. She didn't even turn around when I called to her. People sure are strange sometimes.

Bill Barker had been a mailman for nearly nine years and he'd never seen anything like it. Mrs. Patterson had asked him to help get down her cat from the pear tree beside her house, and he was sure he saw a dog around the corner. What's more, he was sure it had been green. But when he looked, it was gone. Mrs. Patterson was quite positive that her cat had had a nervous breakdown. Then just as he had started up the street again, some boy came up and asked him nonchalantly if he had seen his green dog . . . well, he was due for a vacation anyway. He'd take Mrs. Barker up to that little cottage in the mountains. It was quiet there. Sure, that's where he'd go. Tomorrow . . . maybe this afternoon.

I didn't find Gus, as you probably guessed. It's been two days now too. We put an ad in the paper finally last night, and you

should see the crazy telegrams that we got today. Doug felt kind of bad about Gus's getting away, so I didn't say anything more about it to him. One telegram from some fellow said that he had pink elephants that weren't so very reliable either, and another guy reported that he had a pale lavender polar bear in a hole in his back yard. It made Doug feel better, I guess.

Oh, I almost forgot to say . . . I know Gus isn't really gone, because last night when it was getting rather dark outside, I was on my way home from Henry's. I saw him plain as day. He was sitting right under the street lamp, and you know . . . if I didn't know better I'd say that he was wearing the biggest, greenest, ear-to-ear grin that I ever saw.

Say, by the way, if you see a green dog around, let me know, will ya? The name is Jim, although I also answer to Knucklehead Carter. You'll know the house okay. The dog and the garage were dyed to match.

VIRGINIA HOLMES, Maine Twp. H. S., '57
Robert Barker, teacher

NOW WE BELONG

"Welcome to the United States of America, ladies and gentlemen." I know I'll never forget these few simple words and what they represented on November 8, 1956. That day will always stand out as one of the most important days in my life because on that cold, sunny morning, I became a full-fledged citizen of the United States of America.

It was 9:00 a.m. There we were in Circuit Court. To my astonishment, I found out that we had plenty of company, about one hundred and fifty persons. I had never realized before that there were so many unnaturalized persons living in Rockford. As we sat waiting for Judge O'Sullivan to arrive at 9:30 a.m., I thought about all the preliminary requirements that we had to meet. We found out that the naturalization process can be very much involved.

First, our family had to prove our loyalty, integrity, and sincerity toward this country and toward our newly-acquired friends. We had a probation period of three years in which to carry out this duty. When the period ended, we were very happy that we had met these requirements of the naturalization laws. We filed our petitions, together with three 2" x 2" unsigned photographs

of each of us, in June; we were called down for examination in September. This was another happy day, for it meant that our petitions had been accepted and that we were actually under consideration as future citizens. Next, our family, together with our three witnesses, visited the local naturalization office, which is in the Rockford Court House. I remembered that September day.

We sat here in the hall waiting. My hands were cold and clammy. My forehead was perspiring continually. Nervousness had overcome my father, and he was pacing back and forth. Father was called in after twenty-five minutes of pacing. It seemed to me that he was in there for an extremely long time. I was a little worried because he wasn't too strong on the American history. Five minutes, ten minutes passed, and I was almost in a state of collapse. Finally the door opened, and Father came out. His face was relaxed and he was smiling.

I was so relieved. But when the examiner asked my name, I had to stop and think because, all of a sudden, my mind was blank. However, I quickly came to my senses, and I even answered all the questions correctly.

I remember walking out of the court building that morning. My mind was clear, but my heart still pounded with excitement; for the third and the final step of naturalization was to face me on November 8, at 9:30 a.m.

A shove in the ribs from my right-hand neighbor brought me back to reality. I looked at the clock—9:15 a.m. Fifteen minutes before we could get the gift we wanted the most! What a Christmas present it would be! I realized, too, that Christmas wasn't far away. Then I remembered another Christmas, a Christmas that was filled with pain and misery.

It was on a cold, frosty Christmas night that our family fled from our homeland, Poland. We later heard through the grapevine that most of our friends and relatives were either dead or in the prison camps.

I can still remember that night before Christmas. Older boys and girls were going around caroling, and the night was filled with familiar strains of *Wsrod Nocnej Ciszy*¹ and *Bog Sie Rodzi*.² My sisters and I were not permitted to go outside as it was too cold and we were too young to participate in such things. To pass the time, I played with my pet kitten. He

¹ *In the Silence of the Night.*

² *God is Born.*

was all yellow with black coloring in his ears and on his feet. However, that was the last time I played with him.

That night was rudely interrupted by sharp cries of men and women. Half-asleep horses gave strange sounds as they were being harnessed to the wagons. Confusion was sweeping the village of Grodno as desperate mothers looked for their lost children. German soldiers were wrecking houses. As we were fleeing, we could see the sky colored red from the hungry tongues of fire that devoured our homes and other possessions. Hitler was paying us a visit. We were lucky to get away in time and we try never to forget it.

I remember our welcome when we came to the United States in 1949. As we landed, we heard the National Anthem played by a huge band of service men. This reception was both frightening and joyful. We laughed and cried at the same time. As years passed, we began to lose our fears of strangers and began developing a feeling of security and freedom.

A sudden rustling of clothing and a shuffling of feet interrupted my reminiscence. It was 9:30 a.m. Judge O'Sullivan, followed by several court officers, came in to open the procedures. Everyone stood up. A strange silence fell over the room, and I almost thought I was in a church instead of a court room. I looked at my family and other people standing near me. Their faces were sober, but their eyes reflected their feelings. Their eyes were shiny and filled with a new light, like a light from a candle in darkness. A prayer was given by a local minister, and the court came into session.

Our names were called off, and the petitions were presented to the judge. Our witnesses were questioned about our qualities as citizens. Our wish was granted when the judge approved our petitions. The naturalization phase was ended, and we went into the adjoining room to sign our final papers. As we were walking out, a representative of the D.A.R. was handing out little American flags as a memento of this great occasion.

I couldn't help feeling sorrow for an elderly man who, with tears in his eyes said, "For this little flag, I gave up my country." I'm sure that he wasn't sad for a long time because he must have realized that he had just gained a new country, a new home filled with freedom and equal rights for all. The little flag which we keep on our wall will always remind us of the treasure we found on November 8, 1956, at 9:30 a.m.

OLGA LITVINCHUCK, Rockford East H. S., '57
Adele Johnson, teacher

"OLD AND GRADUATED"

Strains of "Pomp and Circumstance" floated out into the hall. Suddenly 400 excited, whispering seniors grew silent. Graduation was beginning.

Bill Myers squared his shoulders and felt his commencement gown flop about as he took a step. If Bill stretched his fingers, a small portion of his hand could be seen peeking out of the voluminous sleeves. He started down the aisle in cadence.

As he marched, he held his head perfectly still so that his mortarboard would not slip over his left eye. Standing before his seat, Bill flexed his toes inside his new black shoes. A blister was forming on the left heel.

"Oh, brother! What we have to go through for one piece of paper!" Bill thought as the drone of speeches began.

Mrs. Myers fidgeted in her seat.

"Goodness, I hope he remembered his handkerchief," she whispered nervously to her husband. "Did you notice whether he took off his sneakers?"

Over the microphone came the name, "William W. Myers." Automatically Bill started the long walk across the stage.

Watching as if the boy were a casual acquaintance, Mr. Myers mused, "Look at that cocky walk! I'll bet he imagines himself as old and wise as a Harvard professor. To think that just yesterday he burned out every fuse in the house when he tried to replace a lamp bulb."

Just then the principal pumped Bill's hand. The diploma! It was Bill's!

"Thank goodness, we don't have another year of him," murmured Miss Kelley, English composition, to Miss Andrews, social science. "I never saw a boy who was so allergic to grammar."

Nodding sympathetically, Miss Andrews confided, "You'd never guess that last Tuesday he was sure that Chicago was the capital of Illinois."

Finally the Class of '56 stood outside the auditorium and received the many hearty and sometimes tear-stained congratulations of friends and relatives.

A group of freshmen peered around a corner.

"Look at them. Seniors know more than anybody. I wonder how it feels to be old and graduated."

LEAH SCHROTBERGER, Glenbard Twp. H. S., Glen Ellyn, '57
Helen McConnell, teacher

HONORABLE MENTION

Aurora: (Franklin Junior High School) "A Slippery Proposition," by Joel Kaufman, 9th grade (Gertrude Fell Mead, teacher).

Elmhurst: (York Community High School) "If You Ever Happen To Come To My Home Town," by Molly Kelly, 12th grade (Eleanor A. Davis, teacher).

Evanston: "The Line-Up," by Judy Bleier, 10th grade (Charlotte Whittaker, teacher); "La Corrida," by Mahlon Jones, 12th grade (Mildred Hudson, teacher); "Opus Magnum," by Buster Kamin, 11th grade (Clarence W. Hach, teacher); "Night," by Marianne Masterson, 11th grade (Clarence W. Hach, teacher); "Beauty," by Marianne Masterson, 11th grade (Clarence W. Hach, teacher); "The Abyssal Romance," by Gail Thain, 9th grade (Mary Jane Richeimer, teacher); "Faint Heart Never," by Barbara O'Neil, 12th grade (Barbara Pannwitt, teacher); "Variations on an Original Theme," by Tim Packard, 11th grade (Clarence W. Hach, teacher); "Don't Be Afraid," by Mary K. Tingley, 9th grade (Elizabeth H. Bennett, teacher).

Galva: "Ronald's Transportation System," by Joanna Huber, 12th grade (Mildred Lapan, teacher).

Genoa-Kingston: "Thoughts," by Theresa Lianzi, 12th grade (Gladys Wibking, teacher).

Glen Ellyn: (Glenbard Township High School) "Christmas Fantasy," by Pam Hurlbut, 12th grade (Helen McConnell, teacher).

Jacksonville: "An Auto Junkyard," by Luci Dodd, 12th grade (Emma Mae Leonhard, teacher).

Naperville: "This I Believe," by Sharon Barkee, 12th grade (Leona McBride, teacher); "There Ought To Be a Law," by Kathleen Osborne, 10th grade (Dorothy Scroggie, teacher).

Normal: (University High School) "Suspense at Two A.M.," by Bjorne R. Ullsvik, Jr., 12 grade (Ruth Stroud, teacher).

Rock Island: (Alleman High School) "A Wonderful Experience," by Nancy Mauch, 9th grade (Sister Loyola, O.S.B., teacher).

Rockford: (East High School) "Dadals," by Judy Ream, 11th grade (Edna Youngquist, teacher).

